United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1696
28 July 1994

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council extends UNIFIL mandate for six months to 31 January 1995; reiterates support for Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence; says States should not threaten or use force against other States.

+ General Assembly, by 121 votes in favour to none against, with seven abstentions, adopts Agreement amending deep seabed mining provisions of Law of Sea Convention.

+ Under-Secretary-General Annan reiterates need for prompt deployment of UNAMIR, saying United Nations is racing against time in Rwanda; berates Member States for woeful response to appeals for troops and equipment.

+ Under-Secretary-General Hansen says Rwandan Government will cooperate fully with humanitarian operations and efforts to encourage return of refugees.

+ Secretary-General sends special mission to Somalia to discuss reduction of UNOSOM II troop strength.

+ UNPROFOR Commander condemns Bosnian Serb attack on convoy near Sarajevo; say he would have sought NATO close air support without hesitation had suitable target been indentified.

* * *

The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for six months to 31 January 1995. It took that action, responding to a request by the Lebanese Government and the Secretary-General's recent report on UNIFIL, by unanimously adopting resolution 938 (1994). In his report, the Secretary-General said UNIFIL contributed to stability and the safety of the population in southern Lebanon, which remained tense and volatile. He noted that Israel still occupied parts of the country -- despite the Council's repeated calls for its withdrawal -- and that the Force continued to be prevented from implementing its mandate.

(more)

For information media--not an official record

In a statement read out by its President, Jamsheed Marker (Pakistan), after the adoption of the resolution, the Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries. It asserted that any State should refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other State.

The Council also stressed the urgent need for implementation of resolution 425 (1978), which approved the Force's terms of reference and general guidelines, in all its aspects. It reiterated its full support for the Taif Agreement and for the continued efforts of the Lebanese Government to consolidate peace, national unity and security in the country, while successfully carrying out the reconstruction process. The Council also commended the Government for its efforts to extend its authority in southern Lebanon in full coordination with UNIFIL. It went on to express concern over the continuing violence in the area, and regret at the loss of civilian life, and urged all parties to exercise restraint.

* * *

The General Assembly today adopted the Agreement on the implementation of the deep seabed mining provisions contained in part XI of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Agreement, which was intended to lead to universal acceptance of the Convention, will be interpreted and applied together with those provisions as a single instrument. In the event of any inconsistency, the provisions of the Agreement will prevail. The Assembly took that action by a vote of 121 in favour to none against, with seven abstentions (Colombia, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Russian Federation, Thailand and Venezuela).

The Convention on the Law of the Sea is expected to enter into force on 16 November, and the Agreement will be opened for signature tomorrow in the General Assembly Hall.

Following the adoption of the resolution, General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) said wider participation in the Convention would not only result in preserving its integrity, but also serve to consolidate and strengthen its provisions.

* * *

The Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations, Kofi Annan, today reiterated that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) must be fully deployed as soon as possible to end the tragedy there. He told correspondents at Headquarters that the United Nations was in a race against time, and that the death toll would mount steadily if Member States did not act to deploy adequately trained and equipped toops. He stressed that UNAMIR did not need anything that Member States did not already possess. Based on existing commitments, it was hoped that 3,000 troops could be deployed by the second half of August.

Prompt action to strengthen UNAMIR could have saved many lives, Mr. Annan continued. The Department of Peace-keeping Operations had appealed for troop

(more)

contributions in May, but the response had fallen woefully short of needs. There were now only 550 troops on the ground -- two months after the Security Council had authorized a deployment of 5,500. Some Governments had offered troops without equipment, while others had offered equipment without troops. Matching the two was expensive and time consuming, as witnessed in the former Yugoslavia. Some Governments had insisted on payment for equipment on difficult terms, leading to protracted negotiation, while others had offered equipment which needed extensive servicing. The United Nations Secretariat was not blameless, as its administrative procedures were not entirely responsive to emergency needs.

States were suffering from "post-Somalia syndrome" and had been reluctant to get involved in Rwanda, Mr. Annan went on to say. However, in certain situations there was no choice between action and inaction. International peace and security were no longer threatened by nuclear war, but by ethnic and regional conflicts, which required prompt and effective action by the international community.

* * *

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Peter Hansen today left Nairobi for Geneva, having completed his mission to Rwanda. According to a United Nations spokesman, Mr. Hansen and Special Representative Shahryar Khan received all the commitments they wanted from the Rwandan Government regarding humanitarian operations in the country and measures to facilitate the return of refugees. Mr. Hansen emphasized that Government officials had been extremely cooperative. As a result, the United Nations emergency office will move its headquarters from Nairobi to Kigali.

Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 10,000 refugees a day were returning to Rwanda from Goma, bringing the total number of returnees to 50,000.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has sent a special mission to Mogadishu to discuss matters relating to the reduction of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) troop levels with the Force Commander and Special Representative there. The mission, which was expected to arrive in Somalia today, will also meet with humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations regarding their work and security needs. The mission is being led by Major-General Timothy Dibuama.

* * *

The Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lieutenant-General Michael Rose, has strongly condemned yesterday's attack by Bosnian Serb forces on a logistics convoy outside Sarajevo. One British soldier was killed in the incident and another was wounded. He said the assertion by the Bosnian Serbs that they had only

(more)

attacked the convoy because they believed it to belong to the Bosnian Army was wholly worthless, given that they had later fired on a French military unit which was trying to recover vehicles.

Lieutenant-General Rose noted that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had provided air cover for UNPROFOR yesterday, and stressed that he would have asked for close air support without hesitation had a suitable target been indentified. He said he would protest the incident in the strongest possible terms to the Bosnian Serb authorities in Pale.

* * *

* *** *